

COMMITMENT

TO A
*CHRISTIAN
RENEWAL*

**Conversations
With An Indian Sage**

Raymond A. Hauserman

Commitment to a Christian Renewal

Conversations with an Indian Sage

Raymond A. Hauserman
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To Him Whose Name Is Above All Names

Acknowledgments

First, I offer my deep gratitude to Sree Sree Thakur. His words made "The Commitment to Christ" series possible.

To all those who visited Thakur beginning with my mother, her many friends, their friends and the friends of their friends - my gratitude. Over the years they questioned, cross-questioned and re-questioned Thakur until, as one observer commented, "I don't think anyone can ask an original question anymore."

To all those in the U.S.A. - Ed Spencer, Dave Carpenter, Norm Fenn, Bob Cumming, John Kaltenbach, Bob Hauserman, Janet Clee, and so many others – whose criticism, advice and inspiration are part of the series. I acknowledge with deep gratitude the help directly and indirectly that they have given over the past four decades. It is to these people that all the credit and praise is due for inspiration or perception that may be found in this book and those to come.

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Introduction

For the past twenty-five years, the American young people have been inundated by a variety of spiritual teachers and gurus from India. From

TM to Tantric, from Pranayam to Kundalini - some more valid than others - but all attracting same young people seeking faith and purpose.

The exotic, the esoteric, the strange and mysterious - all have drawn a generation of young people away from the moorings of their traditions, from loyalty to their family, and from their roots. Some feel they've found answers, many have become confused; but the longing, yearning to find meaning and fill the emptiness inside remains, and the search goes on.

Now, in this small book, a different kind of Indian spiritual teacher is introduced. He is a Brahmin Hindu, who for the past four decades has inspired, cajoled and coaxed thousands of American Christians to commit themselves to Christ and the Church – totally and completely. It has been done so practically and aggressively that there are those who feel that Thakur's suggestions may be a spark that can inspire a new revival in the Christian Church in the U.S.A.

Who is this Hindu sage who is leading Americans back to Christ and to His Church? Anukul Chandra Chakrabarty (affectionately called Thakur) was born in 1888 in North Bengal. He was a doctor and an inspiring teacher of ordinary people from all walks of life, backgrounds, and nationalities.

This book includes some of the conversations which Thakur had with a number of American Christians who began visiting him in 1945 and continued to do so until 1969. The people who came to visit Thakur often did so out of curiosity and many with condescension. Few, if any, left without a renewed and compelling commitment to Jesus Christ.

I came in contact with Thakur in 1945 and remained with him and the community until he left this world in 1969. During those years, thousands of conversations between Thakur and American visitors of every religious background - Catholic, Protestant and Jewish were recorded. I have compiled and edited some of those which seem timely. Most of the small talk and interruptions that were a constant part of the life around Thakur have been eliminated. I have sought to condense and collate those discussions which seemed to fit together. The American visitors have not been identified because they preferred it that way. Also, the ideas seemed more vital than the personalities. Other books will be published on a commitment to Christian marriage, Christian education, Christian law and justice, Christian science and industry as well as a book on Thakur's life and the long term effect of Thakur's ideas on these American Christians.

Some will find Thakur's insight incredible. Some may wonder if he really existed. But after more than forty years, the compelling intensity of his love for Jesus Christ seems more contagious now than it was when he would speak of it.

The question may be asked: Does a person who considers himself a devout Christian, yet not in any unique sense, have the capacity - or even the right – to inspire those who consider themselves uniquely Christian? Can he really awaken a new enthusiasm for Christ?

In the following pages it is hoped that the reader may find solutions to some of the problems of the Christian Church. Perhaps, as one prominent churchman has suggested, this record may provide insight and inspiration that can ignite a renewal to help carry Christ and His Church into the 21st century.

Raymond Hauserman
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Prologue

"If you come to me to leave Christ, then I cannot help you and I doubt if anyone can." Sree Sree Thakur gazed steadily at the American visitors. "But if I can help you understand and follow Christ more effectively, I am prepared to try."

"But Thakur, it's not even a question of leaving Christ - He's already become irrelevant. While science, education - society at every level has moved on, Christ has just been left behind. He's no longer pertinent to life," one of the American servicemen replied. 'We've come to you to hear your answers for life because we feel that Christ is no longer the hope of the world...'"

"...but I believe that Christ is the ONLY hope of the World!" Thakur interjected.

The American visitors were startled. It was the middle of September in 1945. World War II had ended and while waiting in Calcutta to be repatriated, a small group of American servicemen had taken the overnight train trip to North Bengal to visit Thakur. They had gone partly out of curiosity, partly out of boredom, and partly because they had heard that this great Hindu saint might inspire them through some ancient, esoteric wisdom of the East.

"I think the very existence and evolution of humanity is in danger if we have no Christ," Thakur continued.

"What do you mean by that?" one of the young men asked. "There are many people who do good work, are religious, and don't even know Jesus."

Thakur's reply was prompt: "But I think, if man is not tied by the noose of God, then he inevitably becomes entangled in the noose of Satan - directly or indirectly. There are times when the devil moves in the garb of piety. Then he'll say: 'Come on, what's the need of accepting Christ? It's enough if you do good work and remain in the path of religion.'"

"However reasonable this may sound, and even if someone moves sincerely with this idea, sooner or later, his passions begin to play tricks with him. The interesting thing is that the person is unable to recognize the influence of the passion. How can he? He has so completely identified himself with that urge that he feels he himself is the passion."

"And that is why the Scriptures speak so absolutely about the necessity to take the shelter of the Lord. 'I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. None come to the Father but by Me' (John 14:6). This, I believe, is the irrevocable, uncompromising fact!"

Thus, in September 1945 began discussions which continued intermittently for the next quarter century. They would involve hundreds of American Christians from three generations with varying backgrounds and motives who came to Thakur to question and challenge. Throughout, Thakur demonstrated his unwavering commitment to Christ and his steadfast insistence upon those Christians to maintain and enhance ---their own faith in Jesus of Nazareth. Men and women, students, teachers, husbands, and wives from every denomination - Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Evangelical - all came, queried, quarreled - and returned home inevitably renewed in their faith in Christ and with their commitment to their respective Churches restored. Most of all, they were inspired to awaken in their particular denominations, a new relevance and revival in Jesus.

While interest in Christ has grown during the past quarter century, commitment to His Church has dwindled. Despite an intense longing for Christian renewal, a revival seems to elude us. In the vacuum created, the New Age ideas, ideals, concepts and commitments keep growing.

It is the hope that the following record of a contemporary Hindu saint's inspiring words to Christian Americans may, as strange as it may seem, contribute to eliminating this vacuum. Thus, the reader may discover that the New Age is still "the old, old story of Jesus and His Glory..."

His Love is not a Sluggish Dance

Early one afternoon in 1950, a group of Americans arrived in Deoghar, Bihar, where Sree Sree Thakur was rebuilding his community to supplant the original one destroyed at the time of the partition of India. There was obvious joy on Thakur's face as he greeted them. They quickly took their seats on the benches and chairs which surrounded him. After Thakur's inquiries about their welfare and their accommodations, the elderly leader of the group introduced himself, an active member of a mainline Christian Church; his wife; their daughter, a second year student in a Church related college; and her friend, a member of an Evangelical college. There were also two young men – college students who had met the group on the plane, and joined them on this visit – curious to meet the Hindu sage.

"Thakur," the elderly man began, "we heard about you from some Indian friends and so, we came to visit. It is becoming increasingly apparent that one of the great problems of the Christian Churches is the lack of vitality. Probably much of that is because of our absorption in our denominational differences. Even in our small group here, four different Churches are represented, and each of us feels that we are a valid, if not the most valid, road to Christ. The issues about which we differ are not so vital; yet, in spite of our common allegiance to Christ, the gulf between the Christian brotherhood that Jesus envisioned, and the superficial sympathy that we profess for one another, dissipates our energy and faith."

He hesitated for a few moments and then continued, "I have heard that you have a perceptive and inspiring insight into practical problems like these. I would be eager to hear any comments you might have."

Thakur remained silent for several minutes. Finally he said, "I think that as people grow mutually interested through an active service to Christ, the necklace of pearls is threaded through. Sometimes, designing inferiority stands in the way. Perhaps there are those who seek to make the greater ones smaller out of a desire to establish themselves in preference to work for the Lord.

"....let the Church be unified through us or let it remain divided...'
Those who think like this, find fault without sympathy, and many times mark time until some hindrance is created. In a word, those who lack any creative and constructive urge, make it difficult to bring a crystallized condition amongst men. Those who are affected by the faults in others; who don't develop the urge to remove them; who don't dream to make integrated and creative, that which is on the way to disintegration; those who don't find pleasure in turning chaos into cosmos; in whom the slightest opposition creates depression and breaks the creative imagination; who lack the stubborn courage

to hold fast to the rudder - such people cannot unite and consolidate others - and cannot bring enthusiasm and energy to the Church."

"Then, Thakur, you feel the idea of renewal and revival of the Church is hopeless?" There was disappointment in the man's voice.

Thakur vehemently shook his head, "Not at all, for this is also true: Everyone normally has an inherent capacity to love. It only needs to be nurtured. The more the nurture, the more it grows. I believe that Jesus Christ is Love Incarnate. Without Him it is difficult to cultivate or nurture that love - it becomes dissipated in many directions through passion and ego. However, the more we love Him, the more intense becomes the creative and Christ-centered urge within us."

One of the young men of the party now intervened. "But it's more than just attitudes, Thakur. There are deep differences in beliefs and practices in the various denominations that make up the Protestant groups. The Evangelicals and the Pentecostals are a very large group; they prophecy, speak in tongues, and effect cures by the laying on of hands. They are committed to preaching their particular version of 'born-again' Christianity. These things are often done in a way that is distasteful to many of us. We also believe in Christ. But their apparent apprehension that something more powerful than their own conception might disturb their faith creates such an intense rigidity that only tension and mistrust result. Particularly irritating to me, is their own arbitrary interpretation of the scriptures and their insistence that anyone who interprets differently is of the devil."

"I think," Thakur responded, "to corner a person by argument is one thing. To discern the painful knots in one's life and then solve them with the sympathy and compassion of the Lord is a very different thing. The pride of the real preacher is Christ. The pride of the false preacher is self-preaching. If there be no true devotion, one may speak a thousand times, pretend in a thousand ways, show a thousand tricks; still, the light of that will not effulge in one's words, mind, or character. If there be no sun, can a million lamps drive away the darkness completely?"

"I feel it is only when the heart heaves up with a bursting zeal to speak what one knows as good - and the mind remains unaffected by what people are saying - and one finds pleasure when people are inclined to Christ, then it is real preaching."

"Thakur," one of the girls commented, "their insistence on everyone being 'saved' and the necessity of a personal experience of Jesus, and being born-again, becomes tiresome and even irritating at times. Many are very sincere, but it seems that unless they evangelize in this way, they feel they are compromising with the Lord."

Thakur commented, "I feel that when an individual person is saved by his surrender to Christ, it has its effect, however great or small, on the collective consciousness. Individual salvation is not separate from community or country. Further, if that urge to express one's faith, one's realization, one's exalting experiences, is not expressed and is suppressed, then the positive influence on the environment is lost. And that fresh and fervent belief is difficult to sustain in the undisciplined and hard-hearted environment. After all, to inspire one's community and country toward the harmony of Christ is the leaven of individual and collective achievement and growth. I think that is why Jesus has said to go and 'preach to all the nations' (Matthew 24: 14) - to make all peoples centered in Christ."

The young man commented sardonically, "The fanaticism of the Charismatics doesn't prevent them from working against one another."

"If five brothers do not individually and collectively stand by the side of their parents, then it is impossible for them to help each other in times of distress," Thakur observed. "Similarly, as the parents are the guides and guardians to a family, so too, Christ is the guide and guardian in the Church, individually and collectively."

Several minutes elapsed in silence until the wife of the leader of the group asked, "Thakur, how can one be sincere to Christ without minimizing other Prophets? How can one be sincere to one's own Church without minimizing other Churches? It may not appear on the surface, but subtly, subconsciously, one will try to establish one's own, at the expense of others."

Thakur shook his head. "I believe that when a truly genuine adherence to Christ grows, then that person can sincerely love, respect and maintain a harmony with the distinctive qualities of other individuals and groups while yet retaining one's own faith and devotion. In fact, because of the sense of security in one's own faith in Christ, this uninhibited acceptance of others rather than diminishing, actually nurtures one's own particular faith. This is the way I understand."

"But, Thakur," she continued, "some people, by temperament, prefer those who emphasize the primacy of the Holy Scripture as it is written, while there are others who by temperament will emphasize devotion to the Living Lord and minimize the Holy Word. And there are others who prefer to sit and pray and contemplate, while others are only interested in doing good works. Where is there any common ground amongst these?"

"I believe," Thakur responded, "that pious worship is a cornerstone of knowing Christ, of initiating a revival and integrating different outlooks."

"What do you mean by pious worship?"

"I believe," Thakur began, "that prayer and meditation can excite an inner thrill that will expand one's consciousness of existence."

"Inner thrill? Consciousness of existence? This is beginning to sound a little strange, Thakur," the older woman remarked suspiciously.

"I think that meditation on Christ, with an intense urge for unity with Him, acts upon our central nervous system," Thakur explained. "Our brain cells become responsive and receptive if we think deeply about Christ, His desires, His ideas, and His love." Thakur paused for a moment. Thus, the response that was beyond comprehension, gradually becomes comprehensible. That is why I feel that the benefits gained from this kind of pious worship can be had in no other way."

But, Thakur," her daughter protested, "there are so many monks and nuns who spend their lives meditating, but I don't see how it helps them or others become more aware of the environment. In fact, it seems the opposite - an escape from facing the real problems of life!"

Thakur's reply almost exploded, "Christ's love is never a sluggish dance! It is not irresponsible, not selfish! Rather it's an affectionate dance of bobbing inspiration and nurturing prowess and that is what He hankers for. That is why I believe that 'Christ-ism' is the normal 'ism' of life!"

After a few moments of silence, the young woman asked plaintively, "Thakur, it's hard for me to understand just what you do support. Do you support the idea of escaping to a monastery?"

Thakur shook his head. "No. I feel it is only through active service to the environment that a variety of impulses are received and in turn inspire diverse feelings and thoughts. Conflicts arise. Decisions are made. Through this, different knots of the mind are untied. Thus, experience and wisdom expand. This is why, think, the last fragment of one's daily worship is to out and find the difficulties in the environment attempt to solve them. Unless and until this is with love and sympathy, I feel the worship is deaf, dull, and dumb."

Now the girl's companion entered the discussion. "Thakur, don't you feel that being busy all the time other people's problems could make one's own meditation a little dumb and dull and certainly a little dissipated?"

Thakur smiled. "Not at all. I think that if you ignore the environment, your life of devotion will not enrich but will only impoverish your life. On the other hand, if you keep the fulfilment of Christ as the link, and enter into relations with the world around you more and more, then, the greater you are benefitted.

"I feel that it is in this way that you become able to regulate different people, situations, and objects for the fulfilment of Christ. Even more, your personality expands and your love for Christ becomes deep."

The young woman shook her head and said, "Thakur, it's hard to see how you can integrate these two different attitudes."

"No doubt, temperamental differences exist," Thakur responded. "Invariably a person prefers those with similar temperament. But still I know that an active, untottering attachment to Christ will expand one's embrace to include all - just as He does in His embrace! "

"But, Thakur," one of the young men protested, "how many people will you find with that kind of devotion to Christ?"

"No matter how few there are, if they become untotteringly adhered to Christ; if they make unity amongst themselves; if they enhance the curative urge to serve and sympathize constructively; if, with that urge for unification, they watch with vulture-like eyes for those things that inhibit or undermine unity and skilfully and ardently strive to remove them by the roots - well, then a lot of things will automatically take care of themselves." Thakur paused and shook his head, "Frequently, people are so foolish, they don't appreciate that they can have everything so easily if they are normally active and interested in the Lord. Instead, they try to satisfy their own selfish interest and establish themselves at the cost of Christ."

"But, still Thakur, I can't understand what only a handful of people could possibly do," the young man said doubtfully. "The effect of their activity on the huge and complicated problems of the world would be insignificant."

"The effects may be seen today, or after a year, or ten years," Thakur replied. "Each feels it when he or she becomes active. Then Christ's brightness will shine through unconsciously according to the person's distinctiveness. One's eyes, movement, expression, behaviour - whatever is seen in Christ, becomes lodged in one's brain in toto. So, the more you work out His words with responsibility, the more that deposited wealth goads you forward. You'll be able to feel and enjoy each of His ways - the meaning, implied and expressed, will burst forth as you proceed on fulfilling Christ for His sake." Thakur raised his hand in caution, "So, never, ever compromise with common interest. It is the comrade of misery. Know for sure: Your untottering, sincere adherence to Christ will adjust passion and prejudice toward His worship and welfare where a wave of revival will swell with an uplifting smile!"

Two teachers with a student came and asked to talk with Thakur privately. The Americans arose and, after promising to return in the evening, left for some sightseeing around the town of Deoghar.

Exercise the Muscles of the Heart

The sun was setting behind the hill when the Americans returned and found Thakur seated in a field overlooking the valley. Once seated around Thakur, the daughter of the professor remarked, "I'm not sure that I can understand the intense commitment you feel is necessary for a Christian life. There are a lot of people like me who are adhered to Christ. We just aren't that dynamic and enthusiastic about uniting together."

Thakur nodded. "Even when attachment to the Lord exists, people entertain certain superstitions which arise out of complexes. They become isolated in them and see all the world through them."

"I don't understand what you mean by superstitions that arise out of complexes, Thakur," the girl observed.

"For example," Thakur began, "someone loves Christ, but his or her attachment to a particular ceremony or tradition blocks them from accepting and embracing other lovers of Christ with a different custom. They can only understand Christ through that particular rite. This is what I understand as superstition."

"But, Thakur, aren't we all victims of that condition more or less?" The young man's voice was edgy.

"But when a passion-pervading attachment to Christ becomes steady, then one can break out of that inbred bubble of passion." Thakur continued, "At that moment, one can make all other people one's own from the standpoint of the Lord. That's why, I feel, that ordinary people who lack such attachment often lack the sign of consolidation amongst themselves, even though they have some mutual understanding."

"Thakur, the intensity of commitment you speak about ignores the innate selfishness in most of us," the young man commented.

Thakur's demeanour seemed to become more grave. "Those who have an intense desire for self-establishment and selfish enjoyment seldom are able to attain any continued enthusiasm or unity. Still, I believe that the slightest attachment for the centre of union – the all-fulfilling Christ - does drag people together. For through this mutual association, each one's inclination, passion, superstition, interest, and desire is knocked. People feel pain. But because all are tied primarily to the one Christ, nobody likes a single person to leave, for then, the Lord's feelings will be wounded."

"That kind of tolerance would be impossible for me, Thakur," the youth remarked flatly. "Maybe I just don't have the intelligence or intellectual capacity it would require."

"But it's only in this way that intelligence can sprout," Thakur explained, "a sense of judgment grows and the capacity to forebear evolves. Thus, a sympathy for all develops unconsciously. As a person becomes adjusted, misconceptions disappear. Then in spite of all the mistakes, temperamental differences, and superstitions, each accepts the other person as their own and learns to maintain the friendship Intact through a brotherly and sisterly give and take. However, if a person has no basic attachment at the root then he runs away at the first tiny clash, and often just keeps on running."

The elderly leader of the group pondered for sometime and finally observed, "Integration may work out all right, Thakur, within a single denomination. But the problem is, as I mentioned earlier, the various Churches are convinced that their own particular denomination expresses the intention and Interest of Christ better than any other group." He paused and then said, "Perhaps the root of the problem is whether one's loyalty is primarily to a particular Church or to Christ?"

Thakur responded immediately. "I feel the Church is the abode of the Lord - the active, inspiring Soul. So, first love the Lord, and for His sake, love His Church. This, I think, is the way to be blessed with the grace of God that guides to unity. But to love the Church, and for the sake of the Church to love Christ, is to be blessed with a tiny, flickering grace."

"Well, Thakur," the elderly leader sighed, "I'm afraid most of us would be happy with even that tiny, flickering grace. Not because we want to, but because it is almost impossible to make Christ first. The demands of family, of society, of friends – all seem to diminish and dissipate our desire to make Christ more prominent. That is the problem and so far there has been no solution."

"I think love is like water," Thakur responded to everyone's surprise.

"I don't understand what you mean, Thakur. What's this got to do with the Church?" the daughter inquired.

Thakur nodded. "If you pour water in a cup, it takes the shape of a cup. If you pour it in a bowl, it takes that shape; and if you pour it in a bucket, it becomes like a bucket." Thakur smiled. "Similarly, if you love your wife, you absorb her qualities, and if you love your friend, you become like that," Thakur hesitated and glanced at the elderly couple appealingly. "When you love Christ, then you become Christ-like."

"But, Thakur, that's easier said than done. It's very difficult to believe that kind of devotion is possible," the daughter persisted.

Thakur's reply was instantaneous. "I think Christ can become prominent in one's life if a daily material oblation is made to Him every morning before taking any food.

There was a stunned silence that was finally broken by the young woman. "Daily offering...before taking any food ...Thakur, how in the world does this make Christ prominent? Besides, some of us tithe each week or each month anyway."

Undaunted, Thakur shook his head. "I think that if one feeds Christ before he feeds himself or his family every day, it will make Him prominent."

"How?"

"This daily exercise of the 'muscles of the heart' unlocks and directs the latent capacity of love that lies untouched in the human heart." Thakur paused and then added, "This is the way I understand it."

"But what's wrong with tithing at the end of the month?" the girl's companion inquired.

"In the effort to achieve an untottering devotion to Christ," Thakur explained, "I don't think that weekly or monthly offerings to the Church can enliven and concentrate the urge as daily offerings to Christ can do."

"I just don't understand this, Thakur," the young woman protested. Thakur's eyes were glowing as he explained. "I think that this early morning offering nudges our urge to love. It steadily adjusts our emotions toward Christ. Our latent love for Him unfolds slowly and imperceptibly. This love inspires our intuition to protect life itself. So, I call this daily material love-offering to Christ the prime mover of existence. In a word, your upward evolution toward Christ is inevitable, if you have a real urge for unity behind this activity."

The woman shook her head in frustration. "Thakur, I don't know what you mean at all!" Thakur smiled patiently. "Suppose you have an urge to love Him, but there is no action to demonstrate that urge; or you mechanically act as if you love Him, but without any urge within. If either condition exists, then, you will only wade - you'll not be able to soak your own mind; nor can you soak the mind of others with Christ's love."

"But how does one coordinate the act and the urge?" the woman persisted.

"I think," Thakur began, "that if, before all else, you daily offer money gained through your own effort to Christ for His service; then, the thought of Him Whom you serve and fulfill through the sweat of your brow, arises spontaneously in your heart. He becomes your very own."

Thakur's enthusiasm grew as he spoke. "Just see how deep is the mother's love who serves her own children through her own labor and pain! In the same way, the daily monetary oblation nurtures practically, one's devotion to Christ. He gradually becomes the center of life, and, unconsciously, one is stimulated to relate everything he does with Christ. Thus, integration comes at every level."

Now one of the young men intervened. "Thakur, why does it have to be money? Couldn't one offer a daily flower or a daily prayer to Christ?"

"This is good, no doubt," Thakur said, "but I do not think it will make Him so prominent; nor will it create that kind of urge which can effect the character." Thakur paused for a moment and then gently asked, "If you or your family were hungry, would you like only a flower or a prayer? So, too, if Christ is to become the center of our life, then we must give to Him as we would give to ourselves or our beloved. Thus, among many beloveds, He becomes the Superior Beloved."

"But, Thakur," the same voice protested, "practically, Christ is not here but we are."

"And if we desire to make Him alive in our lives, then we offer to Him as if He were here." Thakur paused and added, "And Jesus Said, 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'" (Matthew 6:21).

"Then, Thakur, what happens to the money?" the young man asked sceptically. "What is done with it?"

"We keep the accumulated funds, carefully as the trustee of Christ's money. At the end of each month we give it to the Church or person or institution that, in our judgment, most actively carries the spirit, the wisdom and the love of Christ. This is, I feel, the kind of daily tithing that will tune one's will and urge to that of Christ." After several moments of silence, the daughter sighed and said, "That idea sounds so beautiful, but how on earth can one maintain such a practice," her head shook as she continued, "doing it day after day, month after month, year after year?"

There were some smiles at the transparent honesty of the girl, and then Thakur remarked. "I think if you start with the same attitude you have toward your daily food, then it is possible. Generally, we don't know from where that

food will come, a month, or ten years hence. But because of that, we don't stop eating."

Now Thakur's voice became compelling. "Just start right now! Then start planning how you can do it each day. Remember the primary thing is not the money for Christ, nor the amount. The vital point is the practical manifestation of the urge to love Him and to give to Him out of that love. We cannot feel happy without giving to Him - without nurturing Him. This feeling is the creator of tremendous energy and vitality that unfolds our ability and builds an untottering devotion to Christ!"

"It's so strange, Thakur, it's hard to imagine myself doing it," the girl said.

"Just awaken each morning," Thakur responded, "take some money in your hand and repeat as if you are speaking to Christ: 'I make this offering to Thee, O Lord, for Thy satisfaction and pleasure. May the environment be elated and nurtured by this service of mine unto my brethren and surroundings for Thee!'"

There was a stillness in the air until one elderly man approached and requested to speak with Thakur privately. The Americans rose and promised to meet with Thakur the next morning.

Always Keep Christ Untwisted

The following morning dew was still on the grass when the Visitors found Thakur in the yard. When the group had found seats around him, the leader of the group said, "Thakur, the discussions for the last few days have been both inspiring and enlightening, but there are moments when I feel that it's our destiny to have endless quarrels and divisions. A revival that can inspire members of all denominations with so intense a love for Christ that all these differences would be forgotten seems like a remote possibility."

"Nevertheless," Thakur gently insisted, "I still believe that the heart and mind which leans with craving love for Christ to fulfill His wish and welfare does unfold an inner far sightedness, flushed with compassion. This will coordinate different interests, convert evil into good, and death into life. This, I say again, will create a revival that is the destiny of Providence."

"Thakur, what do you mean by inner far sightedness?" the daughter asked.

"Well, just see." Thakur began enthusiastically, "by following Christ how a coordination and far sightedness come! If you have such untottering attachment then your thought, word, deed, muscle, nerve, blood all are put to work at one place, to fulfill His purpose. Then it becomes easy to play the drum in four directions, all at the same time! Memory becomes sharp. Nothing leaves the mind. Why, even the picture of the person required for some work comes in your mind immediately, and how he is to be approached. Not a single opportunity is lost. The intelligence becomes sharp about all people and things in the environment - who is required and where - how and what can be utilized in which situation - what success can be achieved where and by whom - through whose association and by what application - all these things play a symphony in your brain!"

Thakur paused a moment. His face was radiant and his eyes flashing with excitement. "This is the way one finds he can make the impossible possible through ordinary people. Yes! This is the kind of work, the kind of Church, institution, or movement that can really be called an organization. And its very soul, its blood bone is unity - a Christ-centered purpose."

"In a word, if you are roused to Christ, and actively interested in establishing His interest, and inspiring others likewise; well, I say, a consolidation of energy, will, and purpose is inevitable. But if your own personality is not adjusted and integrated and fulfilling Christ, then you won't be able to create adjustment integration amongst others."

The young man cleared his throat uneasily. "Thakur, what is an ordinary person like me supposed to do about all the tortured theological reasoning and philosophical hair-splitting of the theologians of all the groups? It makes people like me become disgusted, and give it all up as hopeless."

Thakur shook his head. "I don't think it's good to be unbalanced or apathetic. Just imbibe Christ in yourself with eager volition and sympathetic sustenance. Tolerate all who wish to love Him. Thus, tune yourself with Him through skillful, inquisitive activity. Always keep Christ untwisted with a thirsty-zeal and open-hearted fulfilling eagerness. Administering yourself and others in this way, with a sober adjustment, infuse Christ into everyone through your voice, your behavior, and your service. I know you shall carry all to One – to Christ. This unflinching acceptance which makes you glow with heavenly bloom, will draw hellish hearts heavenward with a thundering pull!"

Now the companion of the youth observed, "Thakur, you make it sound so appealing, I'm almost ready to be convinced. The trouble is, that later on when we're a long way from here, then the doubts will come back. How is it possible to keep the conviction that I have here now?"

Thakur smiled. "I understand that to be convinced and have conviction are not the same thing. Conviction isn't achieved unless it is built upon one's existence. Understanding is not firm without this conviction. Now you understand, but later, some counter considerations come. You can't stand in an inimical environment when contrary thoughts come. But when conviction really exists, no doubts can stand in the way. Then you can face anyone. Then logic, intellect, and reasoning burst forth. You may not receive intellectually the subtle implications of some particular way of Christ, but your faith is immovable. You know that whatever Christ does is for the greater benefit of the individual and the collective existence. This faith gives the necessary intelligence and logic at the needed time.

"But you must not give latitude to any words, thoughts, and deeds that go to slacken faith. Not even in joke. Such sloppy ways, words, deeds, and associations do a lot of harm to one unconsciously. You cannot realize the harm until a crisis comes. Perhaps in ordinary times you may be alright. But in the battlefield of pursuing the Lord where you must face tremendous obstacles, dangers, sufferings, pain, self-denial, suppression of desires and passions - there you may collapse and back out. You cannot hold your head high, nor stand firm for Christ, where there are any 'ifs,' 'ands,' or 'buts' within you."

The leader of the group now looked at Thakur with a deeper respect and said. "You make prayer an integral part of your methods to make Christ prominent. I wonder if you would suggest a prayer we could make to Christ?"

Thakur became thoughtful and his eyes glanced upward for a few moments. Then with folded hands and eyes closed he said slowly. "Our Father! The Supreme! The Omnipotent, all pervading. Our Heavenly Heart, the Beginning! The Being that has manifested. Our God! Oh Thou revealed in flesh and blood; a child of Thyself to wash off the sorrows and sufferings with begotten blood! Oh, flush the dirt that is onerous and make us pure and able with a tilt of blissful joy! Christ, our Lord, the Manifestation of Supreme Affection! Elate us upward in a service of welfare that enables us with a cheerful, sympathetic heart to uplift with Thy love, all those who suffer from ignorant, obnoxious, distressing thirst! We invoke Thy divine energy that enables us to adore Thee with a restless, wistful service and acquisition in a concord with the environment!"

When Thakur had concluded, there was stillness in the morning air that was finally broken by the daughter of the leader of the group saying. "Thakur, the past few days have been inspiring and educational, beyond my expectations. Now. I will go with my parents and my friend here. We will visit some friends in south India who have been missionaries out here for many years. I hope that I can remember the things I've heard here when I get down there."

Thakur laughed and with great affection looked at her and said. "Now many problems and their solutions, many questions and their answers are in your brain." He held his hand up in caution. "But remember, merely many dishes in the kitchen is not enough. A waiter is required also. If the food is not served in the right amount, at the right time, in the right way, the person will not eat, and even some food may become spoiled. So, serve it properly to the right person, at the right time, in the right way; then you will gain people and people will get you, and all will be happy in the Lord."

The girl's father smiled at the comment and then said, "Thakur, we will leave now and I hope, if you don't mind, we may stop by on our way back home to America."

"No, No! I do not mind. Your visit is like honey to me! " Thakur paused and then said, "Please come whenever you can and stay as long as you are able."

The group arose, and with folded hands paid their respects to Thakur, and walked down the pathway to the waiting car.

Christ's Infallible Will

It was almost six weeks later when the American couple returned with their daughter and her friend. They were also accompanied by two young men they had met in Madras, whose curiosity had been aroused and were eager to talk with Thakur. After a joyous welcome by Thakur and inquiries about their trip, one of the new arrivals, a blonde haired, spectacled youth observed, "I have learned from these friends here some of your observations on the renewal of the Church and Christian unity. I have a question. I was wondering about your opinion of the Catholic Church and particularly, about their insistence upon an intermediary between themselves and God. As you may know, the 'priesthood of all believers' is a cornerstone of Protestant faith. We don't believe in any necessity to depend upon anyone, except God."

Thakur's head shook doubtfully. "But I feel that our very existence depends upon others. I think that if there is somebody as 'thou,' and if there is a tension due to the urge to fulfill Him, then our sensitivity and receptivity increase. From that, we grow."

"But, Thakur, can't that 'thou' be God?"

"I feel there is always the danger of being overwhelmed by vanity and passion without some embodied attachment," Thakur explained. "I think that our libido - that innate tendency toward unification always seeks something to which to attach itself mother, teacher, Lord - and it is through such an attachment that one grows."

The companion of the blonde-haired youth intervened. "What about just loving man and forgetting about God? After all, man's love for man is a common everyday thing. Almost everyone has some kind of role model, so why not just eliminate God entirely?"

"As there is love in man," Thakur began, "so also there is hatred. Someone has to be held above and before him so the love in him grows stronger and the hatred becomes weaker. Man cannot proceed very far on his own. God must be infused in him. On his own, he can rarely acquire the amount of tolerance, endurance, familiarity with individual distinctiveness and sense of proportion needed to make harmonious and evolving relations."

One of the girls in the group shook her head. "Thakur, I can't understand how we can know God. What is the image we should try to hold in our minds?"

"I believe that God is wherever mercy is," Thakur began. "The more we proceed toward living mercy, the more we feel His breeze of peace, power, and

bliss. God is all-merciful. As we move on toward good, as we try to fulfill, protect, and nurture, being inspired by a feeling of mercy, I believe we are walking along the divine path."

"Does God's mercy always show itself in a concrete, material way?" she asked.

"Life itself is a concrete manifestation," Thakur responded. "It is only by His mercy that we live and breathe. It's like the sunbeam is the gift of the sun, so the beam of life, energy, and power are His gifts to enliven and expand our being. The more we use His gifts for good, the more we can feel His mercy in our hearts.

"Further, His mercy always protects us. It never leaves us for a single moment. But He does not deny us the right to enjoy the results of our own activity, whether good or bad. It is also a fact that His mercy can instantly set us free from all those sufferings we have created for ourselves through our stupid, short-sighted or foolish behavior."

"How does he do it, Thakur?"

"I think," Thakur began, "at that very moment when we implore His mercy with an ardent, genuine longing, then and there He frees us from that suffering and misery. We may choose to move toward destruction, but God, living inside our life-urge, seeks constantly to uphold and save existence. This effort never stops."

Thakur paused for several moments and then began in a voice filled with emotion, "And finally, He embodies Himself as a manifestation of His Supreme Mercy...." Thakur hesitated and then with child-like innocence asked, "Did you ever stop to think what this world would have been like without the advent of Jesus Christ?" As he said this, Thakur's eyes filled with tears and his voice became choked. His fervor created a stillness that prevailed for some time.

"But still, Thakur," the blonde-haired youth commented, "after all these years of Christ, the situation hasn't changed much."

Thakur glanced at the questioner and his voice became sober, "I think there is an end in death, but life is endless. And while we live in the world, the light of life remains. But, if we exist and have no self-elevation, then we live in a light-less, living tomb. But still I know that Christ's door of life and light is ever open."

Now the elderly leader of the group asked, "Thakur, there is a question that has often bothered me: Why, if Christ is omnipotent, didn't He save Himself? Or at least why didn't His Father in Heaven?"

A shadow of pain seemed to pass over Thakur's face momentarily. "I believe God was revealed in flesh and blood, a child of Himself, who came to wash off the sorrows and sufferings with begotten blood. I know that His object is always to live and help live. When He has to work in this material world, He must do so through His human form and within the limits of time and space. Even more, I know that His will is infallible! He is bound to fulfill His mission and is never unsuccessful in His efforts. What seems to be a failure, is used by Him in a way that pushes His purpose of existential love forward. He moves on in this way, until His goal is achieved. Even more, there is always a perfect harmony between His desire, the need, and the Law!"

Before any further questions could be asked, a mother with her little boy came up to Thakur and insisted on speaking with him immediately. Thakur looked at the elderly American helplessly and asked if they would meet him in the evening. The group left, and Thakur became engaged in earnest discussion with the mother.

Love Him! Faith Must Embrace You!

The sun had just set, and the community evening prayers had ended when the Americans returned to find Thakur seated in the yard. Immediately after taking their seats, the daughter of the elderly couple inquired, "Thakur, you do feel, don't you, that it is possible to proceed with just the almighty spirit of God?"

Thakur shook his head. "I think it is very difficult, if not impossible, to understand God without man. Even though He exists, I can't understand how I can approach or understand Him. When I speak of God, I think of One in Whom the qualities of Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience are alive. We think of a kind man when we think of kindness. Where can kindness exist, but in a kind person? And how can we feel it?"

"But what's the practical difference to us, whether we think of a particular quality or of the person embodying the quality?" the girl insisted.

"I don't think there is much life or juice unless there be a living, embodied personality, and we have adherence to Him. Then, we can achieve wonders for His satisfaction, and acquire newer and newer qualities."

"Why?" the blonde-haired youth insisted.

"Because when our love holds Him supreme in our life, we don't feel any sufferings as we move on and on for Him," Thakur responded. "In this way our upward evolution takes place unconsciously. This is the reason I stress attachment to Christ so much."

Thakur-paused and then catching the eye of the girl said, "So let your God be absolute and infinite, but never ignore the material Embodiment through Whom He evolves to you. Otherwise, vanity will entice you."

"Thakur what do you mean by embodiment?" There was a touch of suspicion in the young man's voice. "Is that a person like Christ, or a saint, or an idol, or what?"

Thakur's eyes twinkled. "I think that one is seldom an idolater, but the remembrance of the Lord is often carried through His picture and His image. When one cannot give up one's love and admiration for Him, then His remembrance is brought from the immemorial past into the memorable present with a devotion and obeisance. Is this an offense? Is this a blockade of culture? Love replies: 'No!' Regard and reverence echo: 'Such a one is no idolater, but an 'Ideal-ater.'"

The blonde-haired youth reacted in a voice edged with cynicism. "It may be easier to understand qualities this way, Thakur. But generally, it's seen that the only utility of idols, for many people, is to furnish a place to burn candles, put flowers, and sprinkle with holy water."

"But worship does not mean to merely adore with flowers, candles, and to sprinkle with holy water:" Thakur responded. "Rather, I feel that real worship means to care for His interest, fulfillment, and protection with a tactful skill. It means to make oneself sharp and useful through intelligent discernment and service. In this way, the worshipper becomes worthy and able to nurture life and combat evil. And to neglect this, I believe, is to make the worship impotent and disintegrating to oneself and to the object of one's worship. So I say to you: Always make your worship alive with enthusiasm and earnest activity."

The companion of the spectacled youth now commented, "Thakur, I've seen so many people with tremendous enthusiasm and devotion to Christ and God. But they're so intolerant! So stifling! They shed tears, shout praises, and even speak in tongues; but there is such an arrogance and exclusiveness in their attitude, I feel repelled and irritated."

"I don't think," Thakur responded, "that devotion has necessarily appeared wherever there are tears or expressions of joy and shouts of praise. Along with these, there should be the characteristic signs of devotion - the state of divine life and good feeling."

"What are the signs of real devotion?" the girl asked.

"I think," Thakur replied, "real devotion is free from pride, that is, it has a very thin pride. While artificial devotion is mixed with stiff ego. People with counterfeit devotion cannot take advice. Adviser-like, they can only give advice. If anyone advises them, signs of irritation and aversion appear on their faces. One with real devotion is generally unwilling to be an adviser, and the signs of pleasure blossom on his face if he gets advice. In devotion there is satisfaction out of fulfilling the interest of others. In addiction there is gratification only from self-interest. Devotion is concentric with Christ. Counterfeit devotion is only satisfied in self-interest or ego. In short, counterfeit devotion is the wife of passion, and real devotion is the younger sister of love."

After a few moments of silence, the blonde-haired youth remarked, "I'd like to change the subject and go back to some questions about the Catholics, Thakur. It is very difficult for Protestants to understand the blind allegiance which they have for their Pope. What is your opinion about this?"

Thakur remained silent for several moments and then said, "I think that he who follows Christ freely, with all his senses, is a man with allegiance to

Christ. He who demonstrates such allegiance to Christ is normally the Pope, though he has no greed for it."

"But Thakur," the young man objected, "would you call him the Holy Father? Don't you think that goes a little too far?"

Thakur's voice was softly insistent. "I think that such a Pope always speaks out of a vibrant love for Christ and seldom talks of himself. Through that love for Christ, he loves all the people and sows all of Christ in them. Thus, I feel that sanctity runs through his whole being and radiates to all. Can not such a man be called the Holy Father?"

"But, Thakur, they worship the Pope as if he were God!" the young woman interjected.

"I don't believe the Pope can ever be God," Thakur replied, "but such a Pope, I feel, can administer the love of God:'

"But, Thakur," the woman's voice was pressing, "You can't believe that a Pope is infallible?"

Thakur's voice was firm. "He may be fallible or infallible. But, I believe, such a Pope speaks with the mouth of Christ; hears with the ears of Christ; and sees with the eyes of Christ. And this is always true: Only he who is organized in Christ, can organize many normally."

A long silence ensued. Then the elderly leader of the group commented. "Thakur, amongst the different liturgies, sacraments, and ceremonies of the various denominations, there seems to be one basic difference between the Catholic and the Protestant attitude toward the sacraments. The Catholics seek through the sacraments, such as Holy Communion, to actually relive that sacred event. They actually believe they are bringing the past into and uniting it with the present.

"However, we Protestants believe such sacraments can only commemorate these experiences of Jesus' life. Holy communion is considered an external sign of grace if received with faith. I'm curious if you have any comment or observation on this."

After a few moments of thoughtful silence, Thakur responded. "I don't know any theology. But I believe that the more Jesus Christ is alive in our lives, the more His love, will and Wisdom become part of us. And I believe this can only come if we love Him. When we love Him, then we try to fulfill, protect, and nurture Him. That is, we try to fulfill His will, nurture His dreams and protect Him as He is expressed in His children. Then it is that we are able

to commemorate His life and re-live and enliven His love in ourselves and those of whom we form a part. This is what I understand."

The silence was broken by the daughter's friend. "Thakur, it seems that the whole value of the sacraments - or for that matter of Christ himself - depends on having faith in Him and them. Well, that's not so easy to have!"

"But I don't think there is anyone who has no faith," Thakur suggested softly. "And the deeper and more lofty the faith, the higher the mind and the more profound the life. Remember, feeling is the foundation of faith. Arguments never bring faith. The lighter the feeling, the shallower the faith and the less the constancy."

"Still, Thakur," the girl insisted, "some of the demands of the Churches are so unreasonable and even irrational- it is very difficult to have any faith in them."

"But I understand that faith is beyond the range of intellect," Thakur explained. "In fact, intellect is according to faith. There is 'yes' and 'no' in intellect. There is doubt. In faith there is no 'yes' or 'no.' There is no doubt. And this is always true: The less the faith, the more undeveloped and blunt the intellect."

"But, Thakur," the blonde-haired youth objected, "there are many brilliant and learned people who pride themselves on having no faith and often belittle those who do."

"I think that however learned one may be," Thakur explained, "if the person lacks in faith, then he or she is no better than a gramophone or an ox carrying a load of words. Further, I believe, that to remove doubt and establish faith is to attain knowledge. For if you don't believe, you neither see nor realize; and the more you see and realize, the more your faith ripens."

"You make it sound so simple," the daughter sighed, "but faith is very difficult to have and even more difficult to keep."

Thakur shook his head. "To say you have no faith, only shrinks it. Remember, your nature will be formed and your vision will become like the God in whom you place your faith." Thakur became more intense. "So, follow the faithful. Love Christ. I say faith will embrace you too! And remember: One who believes in Christ, becomes Christ-like, and one who believes in satan, becomes satanic."

The daughter's friend intervened, "Still Thakur, faith is very difficult to maintain. The first fervor slowly disappears, and it's so hard to bring it back."

Thakur nodded. "Whenever faith is invaded by contrary ideas, doubts arise. And when faith is overwhelmed by doubts, and those doubts are supported by the mind, then depression overcomes one."

"Then what, Thakur?"

"Give up those contrary ideas. Listen to and accept arguments that favor faith. Then act as if the faith is there. I say, doubts will flyaway, and depression will vanish. No contrary ideas can shake the faith once it has ripened. What can doubts or lethargy do to a true believer in Christ?"

Now Thakur's voice became vibrant with affection. "Remember, the kingdom of distress and misery is in the land of disbelief. So remove doubts! Place devotion on the throne of faith! And watch the Kingdom of Heaven become established in your heart!"

In the ensuing silence an attendant from the guest house asked the visitors to return there for their evening meals. Promising to return again after the meal, they left.

Love to Christ is Love to All

When the visitors returned two hours later, Thakur was sitting in the yard which was lit up with several lights high above them. The moment they were seated, the wife of the leader began, "Thakur, I'm curious as to what your conception of Jesus Christ is. There has always been some friction over the question of whether Jesus Christ was divine or human - or a combination of the two. Some groups feel he was tempted just like a man, and some say he was always above temptation and passion. What do you say?"

Thakur responded immediately, "I think that though Christ lived in the world as an ordinary man with all the ways of man - he ate, slept, loved his parents and family, felt pain and pleasure; yet, His normal, active attachment to His Father in Heaven, His supreme consciousness, manifested itself in His character in a normal way and guided Him at every moment. He was and is, a Master of all passions and complexes. It wasn't that He didn't feel hunger, greed, or anger. But it was a hunger for God, a greed for good, and an anger at hypocritic self-righteousness. His urge for life was so powerful that it controlled easily all the passions anger, greed, sex, ego, vanity, and so on."

Thakur's eyes flashed with admiration as he continued, "All of this was as natural and automatic to Him as respiration is to an ordinary man! Christ was and is normal in every way - ever unattached, yet all-attracting - the Royal Road to man's salvation. Love to Him is love to All in the worship of God. Truly I say: He is the Way, the Truth, the Light of Life!" (John 14:6).

The quiet sense of exaltation was finally broken by the blonde-haired youth who observed, "We Protestants believe that no man is better than another, Thakur. If not equal biologically, at least all are equal in Christ. And that is why our Churches try to be democratic!"

"The Church may be democratic in the sense that Christ was and is the interest of all according to traditional distinctiveness. All men, too, may be equal in Him..." Thakur looked at the questioner with a twinkle in his eyes, "...but has any man ever equalled Christ?"

Before a response could be made to this reply, Thakur pulled one of the pillows on the seat under his arm, and leaned intimately toward the group, and asked kindly, "Why is it that we love Christ? Is it not because He possesses the divine love that wells up the existence of every being? And I feel He has this in all His being because He loves Him, the Supreme Father – the Source of all Fathers. And even more, since 'Church' means 'belonging to the Lord,' it must belong to Christ. Then, how can His Church be democratic when it is guided by His tidings - not by the votes of the people?"

Now a radiance appeared on Thakur's face as he continued: "And even more, if this be not the case, then I believe Christ will take His tidings and saunter away with a tearful, sorrowing salute. And know for sure: People who have no Christ, have nothing. Unable to adjust themselves, they scatter with passionate feats, living like vacant vagabonds, lazy worshippers of a useless God-hood!"

A few moments of silence were broken by a long sigh from one of the girls. "Thakur, if Christ is so vital, why didn't He make us love Him? If God is omnipotent, why did He make it so difficult?"

Thakur smiled and then responded. "I think that along with people, God created servants or complexes for them. And though He created people, He has no control over their desires. As He is a self-sufficient Entity, so also, He has left all in the same condition. He has given no less endowment to anyone. People are free to utilize these possessions in any way they choose. They may move toward Him, or they can ignore and disown Him - turn their back on Him, and run after their passions and complexes. Then, instead of those complexes being servants, they become the master, and they make people enjoy the world in their fashion."

"Thus, the more the sons and, daughters of God subject themselves to their servants, the more they move toward the jaws of death and forget the source from which they came. This can easily be realized in the world around us. Having been born of the father and mother, children have the liberty to go against their wishes. But if, in spite of this liberty, they don't take advantage of it, and instead follow their parents' desires with an urge for good, I believe, they profit – many times in unexpected ways. Similar is the case with humanity in general. The more we move toward the Source, the more good we acquire. For it is sure: One who ignores the Source, ultimately, is deprived of all re-sources."

"Still, Thakur," the girl murmured, "I can't see why, when Christ is so all-loving and God is all-powerful, He gave us the freedom to move against Him. After all, this is the main reason for all our sufferings."

"Love does not and cannot grow out of coercion," Thakur responded. "And even if it could, it would not bring any joy. I feel that when one ignores the possibility of an unregulated, passionate move, and proceeds of one's own accord toward Christ and God through a willing bondage of love, and with a mastery over one's complexes, then that love is enjoyable to both. It is only then that the thrill of divine purpose can be tasted. Otherwise, like a robot, with no alternative, and in a torrent that swamps feeling, if one is dragged to the so called good, it no longer remains good."

"Why?"

"Because the feeling that develops through a concentric love - the conflict between good and evil, self-adjustment and the power of placing things properly – all of these are missing and cannot grow. Thus, people could not evolve. Enjoyment would not exist. Even more, if this freedom were not present, then firmness of character, will-power, and personality couldn't evolve... "

".....but Thakur," the girl hardly let Thakur stop talking, "I can't understand why Christ ignores us even when we pray to Him!"

Thakur's reply erupted at once: "Christ said, '...blessed is he who is repelled by nothing in me.. : (Matthew 11:6) and again He has said, '...he who takes me as a good man will get a good man's reward..... (Matthew 10:40). Thakur paused and then said, "I feel that Christ is eager to give, but if we don't do for Him, if we don't seek His will, then our receptivity cannot grow. Then, even though He gives, we are unable to receive. It is only by doing His will that the way to receive is opened."

Thakur pointed toward the lights that were scattered _around the area and said, "Just see, there are so many lights in the yard. But if I close my eyes, will I be able to see the light? At least, we have to open our eyes. Similarly, no matter how much He may love us, we won't, we can't, feel it unless we love Him and try to fulfill His will. That is why I feel that when we move against the intention of Christ - the Principal of our existence - we feel He ignores us. But I believe: Truly, truly, truly! He is always all loving!"

The group of Americans were deeply moved. It had grown late, and the elderly leader remarked that it was enough for that day, and they would come and visit Thakur In the morning before they left. Quietly, they arose and returned to their guest quarters.

'You are to be perfect...' (Matt. 5:48)

It was early in the morning when the group arrived at Thakur's house. As usual, he was sitting on the verandah and welcomed them with an affection that was overwhelming. There was an undercurrent of sadness, for this would be the final discussion before they left for America. After they were seated, the leader of the group remarked, "You have given us in these few days an inspiring and expansive conception of Christ and possibilities for the Church. We leave with grateful hearts."

"I feel," Thakur observed, "the clue to true religion concentrates in the character and conception of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and it can only be realized through a concentric zeal, love, and service to Him. Also, I feel that it is better to refute none, though you follow the One."

"Thakur, what do you mean by refuting none?" the wife inquired immediately. "Doesn't loving Christ mean that we must refute all others?"

Thakur's voice seemed to overflow with ardent appeal as he said, "Just love Christ for the sake of Christ. Think all true Prophets as Christ, and follow him in whom Christ lives with meaning and mercy. This, I believe, is the essence of Christianity for the world."

"Oh, Thakur!" There was disappointment in the woman's voice. "Does loving Christ for His sake mean we must love other prophets, too? Don't you feel this is a kind of immoral neutrality? A kind of insincerity to Christ Himself?"

Thakur's hand raised in caution. "Be very careful. If in the garb of love for Christ, and with a pride of knowledge, and a motive to envelop the existential gleam of others in a dusky self-conceit, you ignore or belittle any One of Them; then, I believe you will only deprive yourself of their Tidings that can nourish existence. And when your love becomes partialized, then humanity cannot gather together to practice those tidings."

"What do you mean by partialized love, Thakur?"

"'I love Christ, but I ignore Moses,' or 'I follow Moses but belittle Mohammed.' This is what I call partialized love. And this kind of love pollutes a prejudice into the people with every vanity. It turns them away from the tidings that can adjust traits, temperament, and culture into a pious evolution toward One. In depriving yourself and the people, you deprive mankind. Then a murky gloom with fluent flow of words covers all in vanity."

Now Thakur leaned toward the group and with a voice vibrating with a naked appeal said, "So I say again, you must love Christ for the sake of Christ in your thoughts, words, and deeds. You should accept all true Prophets as Anointed Advents. And then, follow him who follows and fulfills Christ in every thought, word, and deed according to the needs of this age. This is the way I understand it is possible to be inspired with Christ's will in every situation!"

"Follow one who fulfills Christ, Thakur?" The young American girl's eyes were puzzled. "Where're we going to find him? How're we going to recognize Him?"

Thakur's response was immediate. "Whenever you find one who speaks of Christ with the pride of faith and becomes restless with pleasure and humility when he speaks of His kindness and mercy; who calls and embraces all with His love - a love that bursts spontaneously from his every word and deed: one who knows no rest unless he be lost in His love - then, know it for sure, Christ lies blazing in him. Furthermore, that love flowing in his heart inspires limitless lives toward self elevation, progress, and peace!"

She didn't ask 'when,' Thakur," her companion interjected. "She asked 'where?'

"Thakur smiled. "Christ has said, '...seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto thee..'" (Matthew 7:7).

The elderly woman broke the silence, "This constant insistence on life, on existence in everything; isn't there at times a desire for death too, Thakur?"

"I feel there is always an urge for life," Thakur responded quickly. The elderly lady shook her head and said, "Oh, I don't believe that, Thakur."

"But, I believe! I believe! I believe! With every atom of my existence I believe!" Though his voice was soft, the intensity of Thakur's emotion seemed to explode as if to literally destroy the idea of death.

The sun had risen high in the sky, and the time for their departure drew closer. The daughter who had questioned so much now asked, "Thakur, through all these discussions, you have suggested the early morning offering, the daily meditation, and the daily service as a process to make Christ prominent in our lives and help us rejuvenate our various Churches. Well, I may try to do this, but sometimes I think that Christ's words to "Love the Lord, thy God with heart and mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 23:37-39) is the best way."

"Right! Right!" Thakur exclaimed. "That daily offering to Christ, daily prayer and meditation on Christ, and daily service to the environment for Christ will ensure that no barrier will remain between you, Christ, and your neighbor."

Thakur paused and then almost like a benediction he continued, "Know for sure: When Christ, yourself, and your neighbor, fulfill one another in a concord of uplifting exuberance that moves life upward: then, I say, perfection may approach you it is sure! This, Christ said, is our birthright and our destiny."

"Our birth right, Thakur? Perfection is our destiny?"

Thakur smiled and explained, "Christ did not say, '...some of you might.. .' nor '...a few of you could.. .' No, He didn't say that. He said, YOU ARE to be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). That 'YOU ARE,' I believe, means every single one of us is to become perfect like our Father in Heaven. So I say, our destiny."

The youth with the blonde hair shook his head dubiously and said softly, almost sadly, "Thakur, it's so difficult to believe that merely these three habits can make an ordinary person like me strong enough to fulfill this destiny. A goal that so many in every age have sought for in vain..."

"....don't say you are timid or a coward," Thakur gently intervened. "Don't say you are weak or evil minded. Just look toward Christ and pray fervently:

O, I am Your child.
Within me there is no dullness or fear.
Never again forgetting You
Will I run toward hell
With my back toward Your light
Crying, 'darkness, darkness, darkness!'"

Thakur raised his arm and pointed toward a nearby vine-encrusted tree: "Just see the habit of the creeper. You too entwine yourself around the tree of Christ, your Master and Lord. Exalt everyone with His tidings of life and growth in your word and deed. Bring something for Him from wherever you roam and whatever you do, always meditating on and praying to Him. Surely, surely, I tell you: His kingdom and His will shall be done on earth even as it is in Heaven!" (Matthew 6: 10)

To that group of Americans, the sparkle in Thakur's eyes at that moment made them feel that perhaps that Kingdom was more than just a dream. One by one they arose, bid him farewell, and slowly walked down the road way to the Waiting car.

About the Author

Raymond A. Hauserman II was born in Rocky River, Ohio, and attended Rocky River High School and Washington-Jefferson College. He served two years with the 14th Indian Army in Burma under the auspices of the American Field Service during World War II where he was twice mentioned in dispatches for bravery in action.

After the war he came in contact with Thakur Anukul Chandra where he accepted Thakur's commitment to help him understand and follow Christ more effectively. He lived with and studied under Thakur for the next 25 years. He was engaged in refugee rescue and rehabilitation during and after the communal riots in Calcutta and East Bengal and the partition of India. He was actively involved in the re-establishment of the Thakur's community in Bihar and in Thakur's educational and social programs until Thakur left the world in 1969.

He returned to the U.S.A. in 1970 and for the next fifteen years ran a practical ministry in assisting and counseling those with family, personal and other problems in the New York City, Queens and Long Island areas. Basic to the work was Thakur's conception that each person be nurtured in their own particular faith – Catholic, Protestant, Jewish - and develop a sense of responsibility for their own parents as primary steps in any permanent adjustment.

The organization, Satsang U.S.A., which he established, continues its activities in New York and Hauserman now resides in Virginia Beach with his wife and young son where he continues writing, speaking, and counseling.

He has written *OCEAN IN A TEACUP* published in 1962 by Harper Bros. and *ANSWERTO THE QUEST* Parts I and II, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan in Bombay. Besides having written numerous articles he has appeared on several talk shows in the New York City area.

COMMITMENT TO A CHRISTIAN RENEWAL is the first of a series of books describing conversations of various Americans on personal, social, and religious issues with this Indian sage. These conversations concerning a Christian commitment to marriage, family, education, tradition, law, and politics will be published shortly.

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